

Admissions of Narcotic Drug Addicts to Public Health Service Hospitals, 1935-63

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THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE Hospital at Lexington, Ky., was opened to treat persons addicted to narcotic drugs on May 29, 1935 (1). The hospital at Fort Worth, Tex., opened 3 years later; its first addict patients were admitted on November 8, 1938. During the 29 years, 1935-63, there have been 84,625 addict admissions to the two hospitals. The present paper delineates changes in the number and type of addict admissions during this period. Nonaddict psychiatric patients at these hospitals are not included.

From 1935 through 1963 there were 70,530 male addict admissions to the two hospitals; 56,453 of these admissions were to the Lexington hospital and 14,077 to the Fort Worth hospital.

There were 14,095 admissions of female addicts from 1941 through 1963. Thus, of the 84,625 addict admissions through 1963, 83.3 percent have been male and 16.7 percent female.

Admission Trends

The number of male addict admissions has varied yearly from 823 in 1935 to 3,769 in 1950 (table 1). Following the opening of the Fort Worth hospital in 1938, the number of male admissions increased until World War II. The wartime decline reached its nadir in 1945, when there were 1,312 male addict admissions. From 1946 through 1950 a marked increase occurred in the number of addict admissions (fig. 1).

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The male addict admissions to the two hospitals almost tripled during this 7-year period, rising from 1,312 in 1945 to 3,769 in 1950. Since the peak reached in 1950, there has been a downward trend in the number of male addict admissions. In 1963 male admissions reached their lowest point since 1948.

Female addicts were first admitted to the Lexington hospital in July 1941. Since that year, the trend of female admissions has been similar to that of male admissions. The number of addicts of both sexes increased after World War II and declined in the 1960's, after having reached a peak in the early 1950's (fig. 1). Female admissions, however, did not reach their peak until 1953, 3 years later than male admissions.

In considering incidence of hospitalization among addict patients, a distinction needs to be drawn between the number of admissions and the number of patients. Thus, the same addict patient may have had numerous admissions over the years, or he may have been admitted to either of the two hospitals two, three, or four times during a given year. The term admissions, then, refers to the number of times patients have been admitted during a year or for any designated period. The term patient as used here refers to a given person, not to the number of times that person has been hospitalized for addiction. The number of addict first admissions to either the Fort Worth or Lexington hospital refers to the number of addict patients rather than to the number of admissions, since each patient has one and only one first admission to a given hospital.

The number of first admissions of male ad-

dicts to both the Lexington and Fort Worth hospitals has varied from a low of 609 in 1945 to a high point of 2,212 in 1950 (table 2). The graph of first admissions from 1935 through 1963 (fig. 2) parallels that of all admissions during the same period. During the period 1935-39, when the first patients were received at the two hospitals, the annual number of addict first admissions was more than 80 percent of the total addict admissions. After 1940, the percentage of first admissions per year has remained between 47 and 62 percent; in 1963, of all addict admissions to the two hospitals, 56.3 percent were first admissions (table 2).

From 1935 through 1963, there were 31,077 first admissions of male addicts to the Lexington hospital. At the Fort Worth hospital, 9,436 male addict patients were admitted from

1938 through 1963. The total number of male addict first admissions to both hospitals during this 29-year period was 40,513. This number is some 5 percent more than the total number of addict patients ever admitted to either hospital, since a patient may have been a first admission to both hospitals.

Between 1941 and 1963, 8,362 female addict patients were admitted to the Lexington hospital, and between 1947 and 1952 there were 109 female addict patients admitted to the Fort Worth hospital (table 2). Thus, of the total addict first admissions, 17.3 percent were of female addicts. With respect to yearly admissions, after 1941 the percentage which were female has varied between 12.6 and 22.0. In 1963, 16.0 percent of all addict admissions to the two hospitals were female admissions.

Table 1. Number of addict admissions to the Public Health Service hospitals in Lexington, Ky., and Fort Worth, Tex., 1935-63, by sex

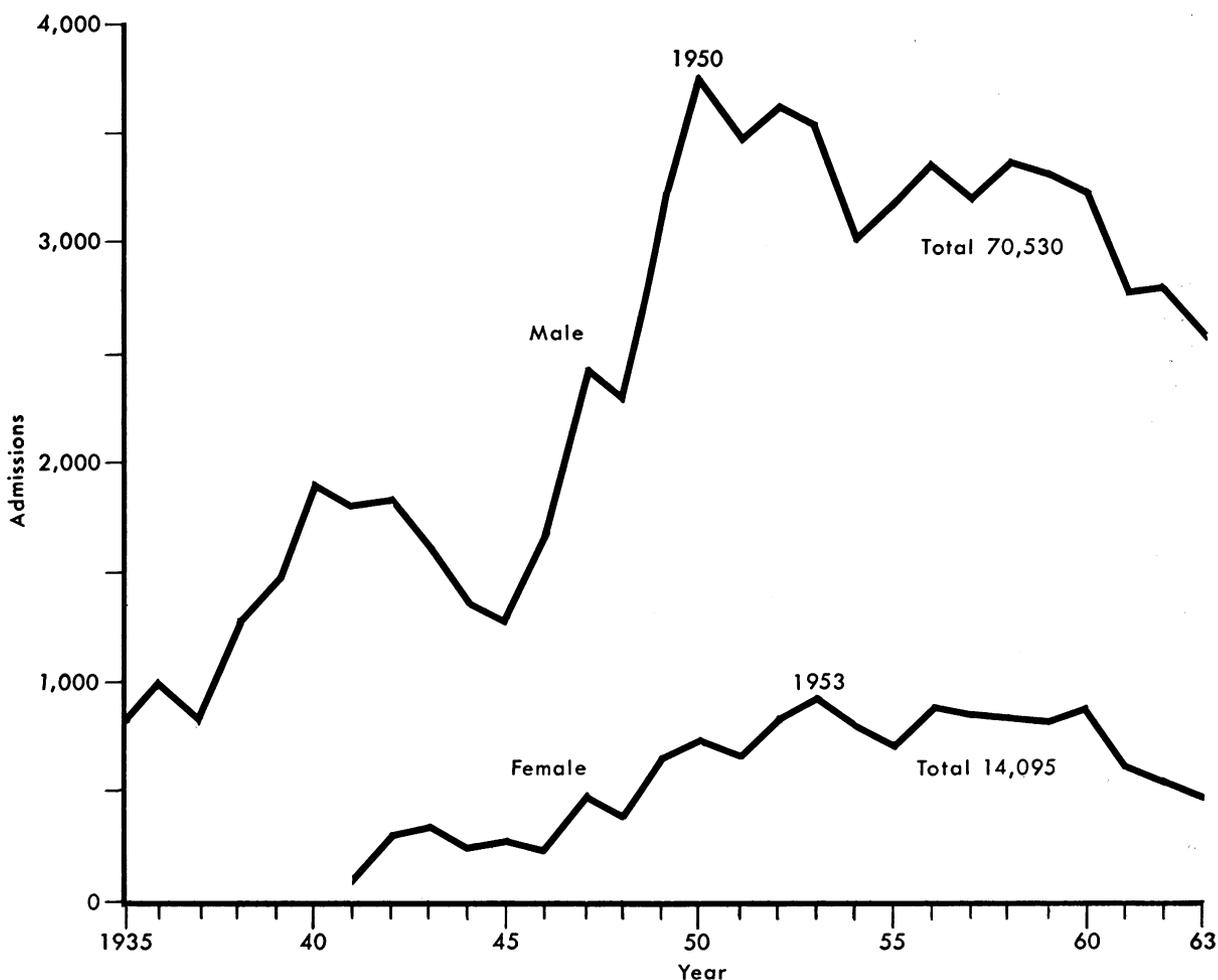
Year	Male			Female (Lexington) ²	Total
	Lexington	Fort Worth ¹	Total		
1935	823		823		823
1936	1,018		1,018		1,018
1937	830		830		830
1938	1,144	172	1,316		1,316
1939	1,012	480	1,492		1,492
1940	981	969	1,950		1,950
1941	1,054	807	1,861	113	1,974
1942	1,350	528	1,878	318	2,196
1943	1,420	227	1,647	350	1,997
1944	1,360	53	1,413	259	1,672
1945	1,278	34	1,312	289	1,601
1946	1,611	85	1,696	245	1,941
1947	1,950	489	2,439	505	2,944
1948	1,923	411	2,334	384	2,718
1949	2,705	504	3,209	666	3,875
1950	3,253	516	3,769	764	4,533
1951	2,890	582	3,472	678	4,150
1952	3,177	451	3,628	862	4,490
1953	2,895	640	3,535	961	4,496
1954	2,314	674	2,988	841	3,829
1955	2,183	996	3,179	743	3,922
1956	2,390	955	3,345	920	4,265
1957	2,489	725	3,214	875	4,089
1958	2,709	672	3,381	867	4,248
1959	2,667	657	3,324	838	4,162
1960	2,590	653	3,243	901	4,144
1961	2,128	661	2,789	642	3,431
1962	2,306	526	2,832	576	3,408
1963	2,003	610	2,613	498	3,111
Total number	56,453	14,077	70,530	14,095	84,625
Percent	66.7	16.6	83.3	16.7	100.0

¹ Hospital did not open until 1938.

² Female addict patients were first admitted in 1941. Includes 154 female admissions to the Fort Worth

hospital: 84 in 1947, 59 in 1948, 3 in 1949, 2 in 1950, 3 in 1951, and 3 in 1952.

Figure 1. Number of addict admissions to the Public Health Service Hospitals at Lexington, Ky., and Fort Worth, Tex., by sex and year, 1935-63



Addict Patients, 1937 and 1963

In considering how the hospital population has changed over the past 3 decades, it is relevant to compare the 1937 addict patients with those of 1963. The year 1937 has been selected in order to employ Pescor's data for that year as a basis for comparison with the last year in the present series (2).

In fiscal year 1937, 1,036 male addict patients were admitted to the Lexington hospital. Of these, 82.3 percent were prisoners. Their mean age at time of admission was 39.1 years and 11.6 percent of the patients were nonwhite. The leading State in number of admissions was Texas. Nine of the 12 states with highest rates of hospitalization for addiction at Lexington were southern States; only 6.5 percent of the addict patients came from New York (2).

In 1963, the Lexington and Fort Worth hospitals admitted 2,453 male addict patients. There were 2,613 male admissions in this year as some patients were hospitalized more than once in the year. Of these 2,453, 80.4 percent were voluntary patients and 19.6 percent prisoner patients. Their mean age was 32.2 years and 35.5 percent were nonwhite. The leading State with respect to both the number and rate of patients admitted was New York; 30.2 percent of the addict patients admitted during 1963 came from New York, and the preponderance of these were from New York City.

In 1963, the Lexington hospital admitted 473 female addict patients (with 498 admissions). Of these, 82.2 percent represented voluntary admissions. Their mean age was 33.0 years and 46.2 percent were nonwhite.

Discussion

In viewing the changes which have occurred during the past 3 decades in admissions of addict patients at the Lexington and Fort Worth hospitals, two general statements are pertinent.

The graphs of addict admissions to the two hospitals (figs. 1 and 2) are similar in outline to those prepared by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics depicting active addicts in the United States (3). In both instances, there is a war-time drop, followed by a threefold increase in the post-World War II years. From a high of 60,000 active addicts reported by the bureau in the early 1950's, the number has decreased to 48,535 in 1963 (4). Thus, the trend of addict admissions to the Lexington and Fort Worth

hospitals is similar to that of the known addicts reported by the Bureau of Narcotics.

The fact that annual changes in the total number of addict admissions reflect similar changes in the number of first admissions is significant in that it indicates that yearly increases or decreases in the number of addicts admitted are not merely a result of changes in hospital policy. Since World War II, all voluntary first admissions entitled to treatment have commonly been accepted for hospitalization at the Lexington and Fort Worth hospitals. Changes in hospital admission policy have principally affected voluntary patients with prior admissions.

The composition of the addict population at the two Federal hospitals has changed consider-

Table 2. Number of addict first admissions to the Public Health Service hospitals in Lexington, Ky., and Fort Worth, Tex., 1935-63, by sex

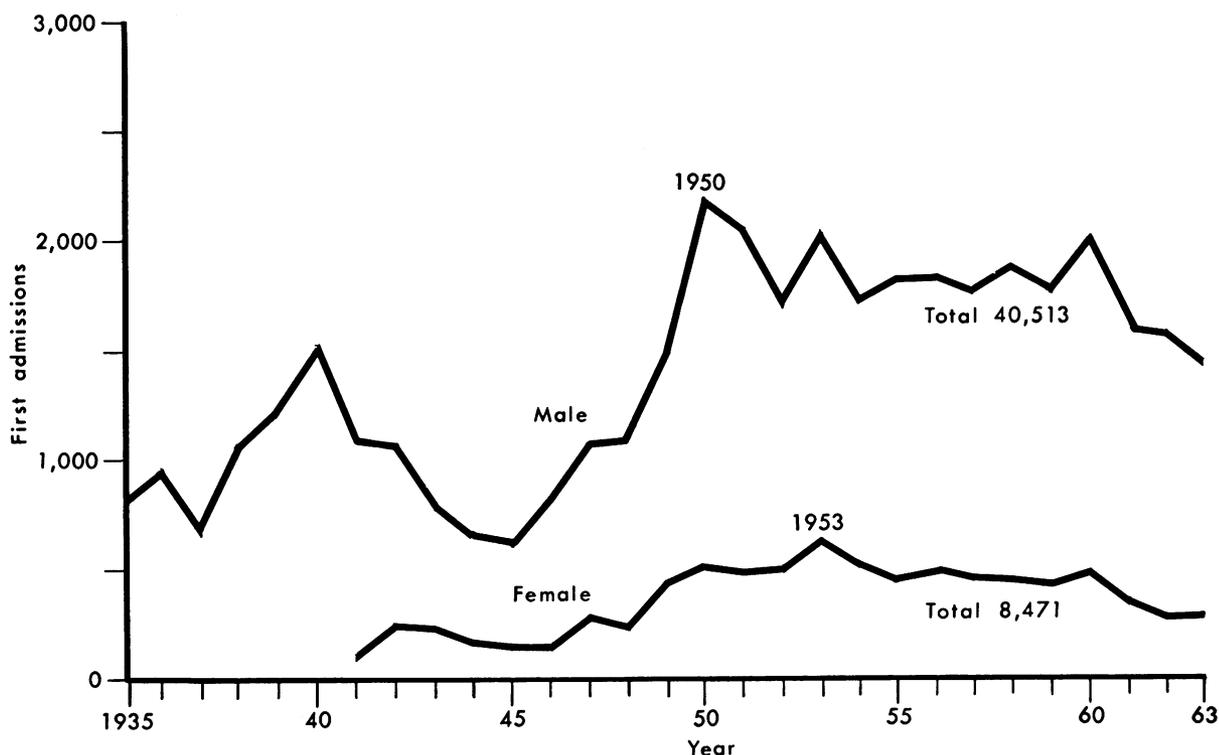
Year	Male			Female (Lexington) ²	Addict first admissions	
	Lexington	Fort Worth ¹	Total		Total number	Percent of all admissions
1935	821		821		821	99.8
1936	963		963		963	94.6
1937	679		679		679	81.8
1938	900	171	1,071		1,071	81.4
1939	778	424	1,202		1,202	80.6
1940	682	841	1,523		1,523	78.1
1941	618	474	1,092	105	1,197	60.6
1942	788	292	1,080	248	1,328	60.5
1943	727	77	804	239	1,043	52.2
1944	646	27	673	175	848	50.7
1945	587	22	609	159	768	48.0
1946	765	39	804	137	941	48.5
1947	791	295	1,086	297	1,383	47.0
1948	831	255	1,086	230	1,316	48.4
1949	1,160	315	1,475	440	1,915	49.4
1950	1,823	389	2,212	511	2,723	60.1
1951	1,600	469	2,069	498	2,567	61.9
1952	1,354	355	1,709	517	2,226	49.6
1953	1,586	457	2,043	633	2,676	59.5
1954	1,310	422	1,732	539	2,271	59.3
1955	1,196	638	1,834	460	2,294	58.5
1956	1,279	563	1,842	494	2,336	54.8
1957	1,311	470	1,781	465	2,246	54.9
1958	1,435	444	1,879	458	2,337	55.0
1959	1,344	429	1,773	441	2,214	53.2
1960	1,572	433	2,005	484	2,489	60.1
1961	1,150	467	1,617	365	1,982	57.8
1962	1,282	306	1,588	287	1,875	55.0
1963	1,099	362	1,461	289	1,750	56.3
Total number	31,077	9,436	40,513	8,471	48,984	57.9
Percent	63.4	19.3	82.7	17.3	100.0	

¹ Hospital did not open until 1938.

² Female addict patients were first admitted in 1941. Includes 109 female first admissions to the Fort Worth

hospital: 55 in 1947, 43 in 1948, 3 in 1949, 2 in 1950, 3 in 1951, and 3 in 1952.

Figure 2. Number of addict first admissions to the Public Health Service Hospitals at Lexington, Ky., and Fort Worth, Tex., by sex and year, 1935-63



ably during the past 29 years. The major changes have been that addict patients are younger, a greater percentage of those admitted are Negro and Puerto Rican, the use of heroin has increased, and both the number and percentage of addicts admitted from the largest metropolitan areas have markedly increased. This shift in the composition of the hospital population was associated with the influx of voluntary patients following World War II. A number of authors have discussed these changes (5, 6).

Summary

From 1935 through 1963 there were 84,625 addict admissions to the Public Health Service Hospitals at Lexington, Ky., and Fort Worth, Tex. The number of addict admissions to the two hospitals reached a peak of 4,533 in 1950. Since that year, there has been a general decline in the yearly number of admissions; there were 3,111 addict admissions during 1963.

When addict patients admitted in 1937 were

compared with those admitted in 1963, the 1963 hospital population was found to be younger, to come more frequently from the largest metropolitan areas, and was more likely to be non-white than addicts admitted for treatment in 1937.

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